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STATE FOR SCA/A AND S-SRAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [PK](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: CANADIANS POSITIVE ABOUT AFGHANISTAN CONFERENCE,
WILLING TO CEDE NEXT RC-S HOST SLOT TO U.S.

REF: STATE 2115

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. This is an action request -- see para seven.

12. (C) Summary: Canadian officials hope to coordinate with U.S. counterparts in advance of the upcoming Dutch-hosted Conference on Afghanistan. They are concerned about both the need to manage disruptive delegations and the risk that some trans-Atlantic allies will cite the presence of action items in the Conference chairman's statement as an excuse not to include them in the NATO Summit Declaration. Ottawa is willing to cede its June 2009 slot to the U.S. if Washington would like to host the next ISAF Regional Command - South officials meeting. End summary.

Yes to Host Afghanistan Conference

13. (C) Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade NATO Deputy Director Anne Burgess and Afghanistan Task Force Deputy Director Richard Arbeiter separately confirmed to pol/miloff on March 6 that Canadian senior officials were pleased about the upcoming Dutch-hosted conference on Afghanistan (reftel). Canada looks forward to coordinating on desired outcomes in advance of the meeting with the U.S. and other like-minded partners, including about what should appear in the chairman's statement and how best to moderate the behavior of the Russian, Belarus, and perhaps other "potentially disruptive" delegations.

14. (C) Arbeiter expressed concern that the announcement of certain deliverables at the conference might serve as a "convenient excuse" for some trans-Atlantic allies to argue against including the same items in the NATO Summit Declaration. Canada will argue strongly against any such efforts to weaken the NATO Declaration. Burgess asked that the U.S. share with Canada as soon as possible information on the level of national delegation leadership and the total number of officials permitted for each delegation at the conference.

15. (C) Arbeiter also asked for information as soon as possible regarding to what extent, if at all, the press would be allowed to observe the proceedings. This will be critically important for messaging in Canada and other NATO capitals, he commented. Burgess separately noted that Canada had in the past objected to being seated next to the Belarus delegation, and would do so again -- quietly but insistently -- if necessary. The choice of language and spelling (Belarus vs. Byelorussia) is important, she added, in order

to ensure that, at the very least, the Bulgarians are placed between the two delegations.

RC-S Offer

¶6. (SBU) Arbeiter said that, after the meeting in March of NATO-ISAF's Regional Command - South (RC-S) members in London, Canada is next in line to host the group in June. Canada would be "pleased and prepared" to host RC-S officials in June, he emphasized, but would also be willing to stand aside if the U.S. wants to jump ahead in the queue to use the meeting to feature the Administration's new initiatives for Afghanistan, including a more detailed officials-level readout on our Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy Review and an update on the 17,000 additional U.S. troops now flowing into Afghanistan. In this scenario, Canada would then take the current U.S. slot in September. Arbeiter asked that SCA/A Qcurrent U.S. slot in September. Arbeiter asked that SCA/A convey its response to the Canadian offer in advance of the March 19-20 RC-S meeting in London.

¶7. (C) Action request: please advise whether we wish to accept the offer to switch RC-S meeting hosting with Canada, and provide the requested information about delegations and press for the Afghanistan meeting in the Netherlands.

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